

Review of Mongolian Archæology

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KISELEV, S. V., (ed.): *Mongolskii Arkheologicheskii Sbornik*, Moscow, Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., Moscow. 1962.

This collection of articles on Mongolian archæology is published in honour of the fortieth anniversary of the Mongolian People's Republic. The compilation also commemorates, and is only made possible by, the emergence of Mongolian scholars into this area of research. Initially, the training of Mongolian archæologists and the leadership of excavations in Mongolia was under Soviet guidance, and is still so to some extent. However we note that the majority of the contributors are members of the Mongolian rather than the Soviet Academy of Science, and that half of the authors have Mongolian names.

Most of the work to which the articles refer has been done within the last ten and often five years. As this work proceeds, we look towards more publications of this nature. The articles are often of general interest to those concerned with Asian prehistory, and therefore I give a short summary of each, but recommend the reader to go to the originals. The reviews follow the order in which the articles are presented in the *Sbornik*.

SER-ODJIAV, N.: Archæological investigations in the Mongolian People's Republic.

A general review of archæological work done within the Mongolian People's Republic, beginning with the discovery of the Orkhon inscriptions in 1889 down to the present. It is valuable for it presents a list of contemporary sources, all in Russian or Mongolian, concerning Mongolian archæology. One must read this introductory article to appreciate the progress made in the investigation of both the neolithic and the palæolithic in this region, since the other authors make only passing references to the Stone Age cultures of Mongolia.

NOVGORODOVA, E.: Knives of the Karasuk Period from Mongolia and southern Siberia.

Description of Karasuk knives found in Mongolia and the determination of their distributions lead the author to discuss the origins of the Karasuk culture.

First she notes the presence in Mongolia of two types of bronze knives which are assigned to Karasuk times. One, the knife with a 'concave back' and often with a turned back end ('tail'), is found throughout the eastern steppe, that is from southern Siberia to the Ordos. Before the establishment of Karasuk culture these features hardly occur in southern Siberia, while they are repeatedly found at Anyang. The knives found in Mongolia resemble most closely those found in the Ordos and Inner Mongolia, although a style continuum exists between Siberia and the Ordos.

Such knives at Anyang are divided into three types:

1. S-shaped knives with a broad blade
2. The so-called ceremonial knives
3. Knives with dragon-like handles.

The ceremonial knife is the most ancient and it is thought that it was preceded by a knife of similar form for everyday use. Thus, the earliest site known for this knife style is Anyang. It is assumed that it spread across Mongolia to Transbaikalia and from there to the Yenisei.

The second type of bronze knife is that characterized by an arc-shaped back. This style occurs during our period from southern Siberia to North China; and, although the Mongolian instruments are closer in ornamentation, size, and type of handle butt to those of North China, the author presents no conclusive argument for the origin of these knives at Anyang.

A third type of knife is important to the discussion of the origins of Karasuk culture because of its total *absence* among the Mongolian finds. This is the elbow-shaped knife. Its prototype can be found in the sheathed knives from the Glaskovo and the Afanasievo interments. The elbow effect which characterizes the sheathed knives is produced by the insertion (at almost a right angle) of the blade into what was originally a bone handle. In the area of the Glaskovo culture this style can be traced back to the use of nephrite and flint as blades, although no elbow-shaped knives in their more fully developed form are known in Cisbaikalia.

The elbow knife is particular to the Karasuk culture and has been found in both early and late Karasuk interments. Its distribution corresponds to that of Feidorovo pottery, named after a site in the Minusinsk region. This pottery, associated with Karasuk interments, is very similar to that of the Afanasievo. Karasuk interment ceremony is also seen as a continuum of that of the Afanasievo. The author suggests, therefore, that the Feidorovo complex is evidence of a movement southward in early Andronovo times toward the mountains of Afanasievo tribes, which maintained (and evidently passed on) their traditions into the Karasuk period. The relation between the sheathed knives and the elbow knives is summed up thus: 'Evidently, the tribes which had retained Afanasievo traditions in making utensils and in burial rites were the first to have cast the bronze elbow knives in imitation of the Afanasievo sheathed knives' (p. 16).

This explanation for the origin of the elbow knife (and, it appears to me, the ethnogenesis of the Karasuk tribes) is preferable to other explanations, for instance, that it was derived from the Chinese elbow-knife money of the Chou dynasty. The earliest Chinese bronze money is round, and the earliest bronze knife money appears to have been made in imitation of the arc-shaped back blades of the Shang dynasty. Bronze elbow-shaped knife coins do not appear until the Spring and Autumn Period of the Chou (8th-5th centuries B.C.). They appeared approximately 500 years too late to have influenced the development of this knife style among the Karasuk.

The author then suggests that 'the Chinese knife money of an elbow form appears as the result already in Chou times of a return influence from southern Siberia to China' (p. 17). This fits well with the rising pressure from the steppe tribes upon

China which we associate with the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period. However, the absence of elbow knives from both Mongolia and the Ordos argues against a Siberian origin for knife money and for a Chinese origin of the Siberian knives.

VOLKOV, V.: Bronze arrow-heads from the museums of the Mongolian People's Republic.

The author analyses altogether 25 Mongolian bronze arrow-head types. These are divided into three main categories:

1. Double-bladed socketed points
2. Tri-bladed and tri-faceted socketed points
3. Tanged points.

Most of the points of the first category appear to be related to corresponding Scythian types of about the 7th–5th centuries B.C. The Scythian prototype (an asymmetrical point with a diamond-shaped socket, on which is a small thorn-like projection) is absent in Mongolia; evidently then, Scythian and Mongolian developments are not exactly parallel, Scythian influence beginning in Mongolia between the second half of the 7th or 8th century B.C. The earliest Mongolian socketed arrow-points were probably copies of spear-points found to the east, especially in Siberia (cf. plate 3, no. 7) and it was here that Scythian influence had its effect.

Most of the tri-bladed and tri-faceted socketed points are similar to Scythian types of the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. However a special development among Mongolian arrow-heads is the appearance of a ring-like socket-butt, which seems related to the round holes which were originally cut into the sides of the blade, near its base, but later cast with the blade. The ring-like socket-butt and holes made it possible to secure the point more firmly to the shaft with small nails or wooden pins. They also occur on Hunnish iron 'whistling' arrow-points, one of which was found at the site of a Hunnish ruin. Thus, the bronze 'whistling' arrow of Mongolia is historically related to that of the Huns, not of the Scythians.

Later arrow-heads with bronze heads and iron tangs are similar in form to many of those mentioned above. Tanged arrows are rare among the Scythians, so their presence in Mongolia should be seen as a local development. The form of the head in general follows that of the socketed arrow-heads, but the tang itself was special to southern Siberia and especially Mongolia where about 50% of the arrow-heads have tangs. Iron-tanged bronze points are associated with the Huns because: (a) it is considered that iron came into frequent use in Mongolia during the third century B.C.; (b) such points are associated with ceramics attributed to the Huns; and (c) these points are similar to Hunnish iron points.

Both Tagar and Mongolian points of the Scythian period contain types which are significantly larger than the Scythian ones. Drawings, from the period under review, depict a short composite bow used for warfare and a long simple bow used for hunting. It seems likely that large points were used with the large simple bow while small points were used with the small composite bow. In other words, the author gives functional meanings for variations in the size and form of the bronze arrow-heads found in Mongolia.

CHLENOVA, N. L.: Concerning deer-stones from Mongolia and Siberia.

Deer-stones occur in connection with the flagstone graves of Mongolia and Siberia and are assigned to the general Scythian period. The drawings of the deers found on the stones are related to those seen in metal plaques in other areas of the Eurasian steppe. According to the little evidence we have, the deer-stones of Mongolia and Tanno Tuva are related to examples from eastern Soviet Kazakhstan, to those found within the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic, and to metal plaques from the late Kuban culture of the northern Caucasus. The Mongolian style differs from the general Scythian deer style. Mongolian animals have a very long beak-like muzzle, flaring lips, two branches of horns in twisted perspective reaching back over the spine and placed one over the other; two forward horns grow over the forehead; they have an exceedingly long neck and front torso. Two disproportionately small, thin legs are placed very close to each other, and sometimes only the upper portion is depicted.

In order to understand the meaning of the deer-stones the author turns to a study of the distribution of the monumental stones of the time. Stone statues on the Black Sea steppes appear to depict warriors carrying weapons. The Mongolian deer-stones also often suggest a more or less vague human likeness. The stone is divided into three horizontal parts, and there may be war gear hanging from a 'sash' which cuts across the middle of the stone. The Scythian statues, as well as the Mongolian stones, seem to have been situated close to burials and may have served as tombstones. The author however is not certain that the Mongolian artists in all cases wished to render, even in a stylized manner, a figure of a man on these stones.

The deer on the Mongolian stones—they do not appear on Scythian stones—may be due to the Scythians. The author points out that the Scythians identified themselves with their word for deer, *saka*, and that the metal deer-plaques found among the Scythian bronzes probably was of totemic significance to some tribes. This became widespread and was carried by a migration of the Scythians to the east. The deer mark was preserved as an element of ethnic awareness, although warrior symbols and deer emblems naturally underwent change and finally appeared on stones which are at best only vaguely anthropomorphic. The author would like to test her hypothesis by comparing the skeletons in flagstone graves marked by deer-stones with those not marked by deer-stones. If the former prove to be more European in their physical type than the latter, then this would be a strong point in favour of her hypothesis.

I feel that this hypothesis must be approached with considerable caution. It is more economical to assume that the idea of a deer emblem spread from one steppe group to another without a population movement or a dominant warrior class. (I would consider style changes more likely to be associated with a migration of artisans.) Also, why must we assume an eastward movement for the deer-cult? The author seems to assume a tie-in of the deer-cult with elements of the Black Sea Scythian technology, these elements forming a non-functionally related complex held together either by migration or by the prestige of the donor society. Although such a non-functional connection is possible, the elements of the complex may have

originated in different regions. This is more probable if the home of the Scythians were placed to the east, perhaps in eastern Kazakhstan. The method by which the author hopes to test her hypothesis seems bound to fail, unless she postulates the coexistence of two extreme population types which remained separate over generations, because of caste—not class—barriers. I do not think that such a form of social relationship is to be expected among Central Asian nomads. My remarks should not be seen as a negative criticism of the author's explanation for the meaning and origin of the Mongolian deer-stones. Her explanation has merit but it needs development, in view of other possible explanations.

DORJISURIN, Ts.: Excavations of Hunnish graves in the Noin-Ula Mountains along the Khuni-Gol River (1954–1957).

This article describes many graves, and some sacrificial places in north-central Mongolia, that is, within Arakhangai and Central Aimaks. Emphasis is placed on graves believed to have belonged to the common people rather than to the Hunnish aristocracy. Common graves are comparatively small, round, and covered with a conical tumulus. In the majority of cases the deceased was laid on the level ground of the pit. The lower section of the pit was faced with unworked stones; more rarely an arched framework made of logs was constructed. Although the inventory of grave goods is meagre compared to those of the aristocratic Huns (in nearly all cases robbers have taken away the best of the grave goods), these excavations have yielded evidence which dates them from the first century B.C. to the first century A.D.

Although the descriptions of the size, shape, construction, orientation, etc., of the graves and sacrificial places are clear and detailed, it would be helpful if this writer and some others had included a few sketches.

DORDJI, D.: A History of the investigation of the stone drawings of Mongolia.

In addition to reviewing his subject, the author presents a stylistic and chronological classification of Mongolian two-dimensional representational art found on stones. The following four periods and styles relate to four different cultures:

1. A petrographic style related to the Karasuk culture (end of second millennium—beginning of first millennium B.C.) [cf. plate 12].
2. A petrographic style of the Scythian type (7th century B.C.—first century A.D.) [cf. the review of Chlenova's article, above].
3. Ancient Turkish petroglyphs (7th–8th centuries A.D.) [cf. plate 15].
4. Mongolian stone art, which is discussed in a separate article in the *Sbornik*.

The author points out that dating the various petroglyphs makes them more useful as sources for the study of Mongolian history. These classifications also have the greater value of raising questions about the relationships between the styles they represent. For example, the author sees the possibility of a historical relation between the Mongolian style of deer-stone of the Scythian period and style elements from the Karasuk (pp. 51–52).

PERLEE, KH.: Khitan cities and settlements on the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic.

This article is in part a general description of the Khitan cities in the north-east of the Mongolian People's Republic, that is along the valley of the Onon and Kerulen Rivers. Special attention is paid to those cities in whose excavation the author was personally involved. This material is extremely pertinent to our understanding of the nature of early Mongolian society and of the relations between the Liao dynasty and the steppe tribes. It appears to me that we have here archaeological confirmation of Lattimore's position that the Mongol empire derived from steppe groups, on the edges of China proper, who were influenced by Chinese empire-building. Moreover, this early association between the Khitan and the Mongols also helps to explain the ease with which the Mongols established an administrative organization in North China.

A number of points presented here are worth notice:

1. The geographic and strategic position of the cities.
2. The presence of Buddhistic pagodas and shrines associated with at least one city.
3. The fact that, although these cities were for the main part support points for those nomadic pastoral groups which acted as tribal auxiliaries for the Khitan, they were also important centres for commerce, manufacturing, and agriculture.
4. The incorporation of Mongolian themes and style elements into the art work found within the cities.
5. The fact that the cities are at times found in pairs.
6. Evidence that large sections of the cities were available for occupation by nomads.

NAVAAN, D.: A hoard of iron objects from Karakorum. The hoard contained iron plough-shares, bushings for cart axles, bronze bells, spear-points, metal rods, and tub hoops.

KISELEV, S. V.: The 'escaped' stone tortoise of Karakorum.

A local legend tells of an imperial stone tortoise which supposedly escaped from Karakorum when the city fell. The author finds a stone tortoise miles from Karakorum on the slope of a hill littered with granite boulders. Observing that only the outline of the tortoise had been blocked out by the stonemason, he assumes that the stone was found on the spot and that it was there made ready for transportation to Karakorum. Presumably with the fall of the Yüan dynasty, the stone was left where it is.

OKLADNIKOV, A. P.: An ancient Mongolian portrait, writings, and pictures on rocks among the foothills of the Bogdo-Ula Mountains.

A rock painting was found in 1960 in the neighbourhood of Ulan-Bator. It consists of three principal parts; a woman dressed in medieval Mongolian costume, with *bogtay* (a cylindrical head-dress with a twig on top), a female maral, and two conventionally drawn figures of men. The painting is given a base line and is has

Mongolian and Chinese writing. The identity of the *bogtay* and other articles of wear is verified by reference to travel sources of the 12th and 13th centuries.

The painting is a religious composition. The author indicates the continuum through time of the deer motif and sees this particular maral as Olun-Hoa, the zoomorphic mythological founder of the Borjigin Obok. The conventional figures of men have their analogies among 19th century Buriat shamanistic drawings. Therefore it is most probable that the painting of the woman, who we know to be married from her dress, also represents a divine or semi-divine being. The point is driven home because the writing accompanying the composition is a eulogy to Heaven, the chief god of the Mongols of the time.

GRISHIN, IU. S.: Ancient monuments along the middle course of the Onon River.

A preliminary report of the many sites excavated in Southern Siberia along the banks of the Onon River, from the Mongolian frontier approximately to where the Onon makes its bend northward to the east of Chindant (near Khadabuluk). Also included is a reconnaissance report of the many flagstone graves found in the area.

Much of the material in the sites had been displaced by wind which had blown away any original protection offered by the dunes. This appears to have played havoc with site stratigraphy. Therefore, dating of the sites must be done by reference to analogous materials from other regions. Since stone implements seem to have changed little in form over long periods of time, dating and classification is dependent mainly upon ceramic analyses. Metal objects were not frequent, even in late Bronze Age and early Iron Age sites, but when found they helped to establish the affinities of the excavated material. Discussion of the relationships between objects found in the sites and analogous finds elsewhere included references to the Anyang, Yangshao, Karasuk, Glaskovo, Hun, and the late Siberian neolithic cultures. As the author says, 'So far we have succeeded in discovering all but palæolithic sites' (p. 110). The article is important for the student of Central Asian ceramics.